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Title: An investigation of the strategic approach of a retail organisation and study the blue ocean opportunities: A case study of Wilkinson Retails, UK

Date: November 2010

Originally published as: University of Chester MBA dissertation

Example citation: Bukke, G. (2010). *An investigation of the strategic approach of a retail organisation and study the blue ocean opportunities: A case study of Wilkinson Retails, UK*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Submitted version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/121363>

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STRATEGIC APPROACH
OF A RETAIL ORGANISATION AND STUDY THE
BLUE OCEAN OPPORTUNITIES
A Case study of Wilkinson Retails, UK.**

GOPINATH BUKKE

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
University of Chester for the degree of Master of Business
Administration**

CHESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2010



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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor Mr. Gautam Rajkhowa for his wonderful guidance, support and encouragement throughout the dissertation period. I would also like to thank my strategy tutor Mr. Ian MacDonald who, through his lectures, inspired me to undertake this research in strategic area.

I am grateful to the managers of Wilkinson, Chester – Justin, Chris and Tracey – who allowed me to perform the research on the organisation. My gratitude for everyone who took part in the questionnaire survey.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continuous support throughout the dissertation period.

Abstract

The current retail industry is characterised by hypercompetition and constant change. The UK market for retail services is continuously growing and allowing new comers to enter the market. Business opportunities as well as challenges in terms of competition and technology are growing because of the frequent changes in industry and rapid advancements in technology. Although Michael Porter's theories force companies to choose either differentiation or cost-leadership, the recent theory, Blue Ocean Strategy suggests companies can make competition irrelevant. Rather than stealing the market share from the competitors of the "bloody red oceans", companies can create new uncontested market space the "blue oceans".

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the current competitive strategies of one of the UK's leading retailer, Wilkinson, by focusing on whether it tend to pursue traditional competitive strategies or blue ocean strategies. This study is based on the data collected from interviews, questionnaires and of course from the existing strategic literature.

Most of the retailers, to some extent, have outspoken differentiation focus and are cost conscious. Competition is also seen as a positive sign which promote the retailers own business. But the fact that majority of retailers are in expansion phase, the cost reductions seem less apparent. However, to pursue Value Innovation and become successful, the retailers should start considering the blue oceans.

Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose. All secondary sources are acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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1.1 Background to the Research

Organisations have long engaged in head to head competition in search of continuous profit growth (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). They are continuously competing for competitive advantage, battling for market share and seeking differentiation. The forecasts or predictions in the most established market spaces are shrinking steadily (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). Although the current advancements in the technology are significantly improving the productivity and allowing the suppliers to produce a unique array of products and services, the niche markets seems continuously disappearing because of the reducing trade barriers between nations and regions, and the instant and global availability of the products and prices information online. At the same time, there is little evidence of any increase in the demand, at least in the developed markets (Mintzberg, 2000).

The outcome is that in most of the industries, supply is overtaking demand. This situation has inevitably accelerated the commoditization of products and services, shrunk profit margins, and the stocked price wars (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). A study (by dailyfinance.com) of major brands indicates that the difference between service and product categories are becoming more and more merged. As the difference between brands get even more blurred, the choice of consumers for specific brands for day to day usage products like toothpaste and bath soap slowly begins to disappear. Thus, in this world of overcrowded industries and turbulent businesses, differentiating of brands becomes harder both in economic upturns and downturns. Moreover, as the products and services are increasingly becoming commodified, organisations are becoming increasingly cost sensitive. A good example is the outsourcing of jobs from the most expensive countries of the western world to low cost countries like India and China. This could be a temporary solution, but for the long term, organisations would have to focus on creating compelling products and services that can take them out of the vicious cycle of commodity competition (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

1.2 Organisation of Study

The current study is focused on the retail sector. The organisation chosen for this study is Wilkinson, a leading retailer in UK. The rationale behind this particular selection is that, the author has exposure working in the organisation and obtained clearance to be able to perform the research.

Wilkinson is one of the leading retailers of United Kingdom that caters to hardware and do-it-yourself (DIY) sector. With its headquarters in Worksop, Wilkinson operates in 337 stores with 23,047 staff members across the United Kingdom. With an emphasis on the large scale 'superstores' Wilkinson operates in several store formats with variable sizes. Unlike its competitors, Wilkinson stores are mostly located in the country's downtown 'High Street' areas. Due to this proximity, Wilkinson stores tend to feature a wide range of product assortment than a typical hardware store (Wilkinsonplus.com).

Wilkinson's wide range of product assortment goes beyond DIY, hardware, garden and decorating items, toiletries, household cleaners, "home-living" items, kitchen goods, stationary products, general medicines, pet foods and other pet care related items, confectionary, perfumes and fragrances, and even computer supplies. In short, Wilkinson stores are almost operated like an old fashioned variety store. However, it maintains a common theme across all these product categories: *offer high quality goods at everyday low prices*. As part of this effort, Wilkinson also sells its own brand products, which almost account for around 40% of the company sales (Annual Report, 2010).

Wilkinson, founded by James Kemsey Wilkinson in 1930 and continually owned by its family, has been growing steadily since mid-2000s averaging 20 new stores per year for more than a decade. The organisation has targeted an expansion of its retail network to 500 stores by 2012. Tony Wilkinson, son of J. K. Wilkinson and chairman since 1972, retired in 2005, making way for the next generation under daughter Lisa Wilkinson and niece Karin Swann. By the end of January 2010, Wilkinson had a turnover of £ 1,556 million despite its high levels of competition and price deflation. Its pre-tax profits were £ 64.9 million (Annual Report, 2010).

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine the current strategic approach of Wilkinson whether they are adopting Blue Ocean Strategy and to make recommendations for any changes including adopting Blue Ocean Strategy.

The research aims are

- i) To understand the contemporary thinking of strategy and in particular Blue Ocean Strategy.
- ii) To understand the current strategic approach of Wilkinson and whether they adopt/follow any of the principles of Blue Ocean Strategy.
- iii) To make possible recommendations if any, for incorporating Blue Ocean Strategy into Wilkinson.

1.4 Justification of the Research

In the current turbulent world, every business is successful until it's not (Hamel and Valikangas, 2003). The perennially successful companies are facing difficulties in delivering consistently superior returns, as the success is always becoming an exception. The organisations, to find those exceptions, must gather and sort through hundreds of new strategic options and then test the most promising ones through low-costs and differentiations. There is hardly any other way to explore the future (Hamel and Valikangas, 2003).

Strategic change is like an experiment which might fail like most other experiments. The issue is not how many times the organisation fail, but the value of its success when compared to its failures. In most of the industries it's the changes that have created most of the new wealth over the last decade. Whether a newcomer or an old-timer, an organisation needs an exceptional strategy to produce an exceptional success (Hamel and Valikangas, 2003).

1.5 Research Methodology

A phenomenological and interpretivist approach has been adopted for the research. The balance of the research has been provided by the data collected using the qualitative techniques.

The primary data has been collected mainly from questionnaires, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the managers, and the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the floor staff. The secondary data has been collected from Wilkinson's website, annual reports, and its advertising fliers.

Finally, the research was based on a cross-sectional research design, as it made use of survey strategy (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

1.6 Outline of Chapters

The structure of this dissertation is described in the following chapters

Chapter 1 - Provides information about the research aims and objectives. It also provides an overview of the Wilkinson.

Chapter 2 - Reviews the relevant literatures by building up the theoretical foundation upon which the research was conducted. The chapter mainly describes the current body of the researcher's knowledge.

Chapter 3 - Focuses on the philosophies, approaches, methods, strategies and designs adopted for the research. It also provides information about the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 4 - Provides details about the application of the research methods for the collection of data, procedures for analyzing the data, the description of the sample and the presentation of the findings for each research aims.

Chapter 5 - Provides information related to the research findings to the theories from reviewed literature. It mainly focuses on the managerial implications, conclusions, recommendations and the limitations of the study, as well as the areas for the further research.

Finally, the bibliography followed by the appendix can be found.

1.7 Definition of Terms

- ✓ Definition of Organisation: *“It is characteristic for organisations to have job splitting and an administrative apparatus, which by different rules, values and agreements as a basis tries to secure coordination, continuity and completion of goals”* (Bakka, Fivelsdal and Lindkvist, 1999).
- ✓ Definition of Management: *“Organisations and management are intrinsically interlinked concepts. Management is the dynamic input that makes the organisation work”* (Walker, 1996).
- ✓ Definition of Strategy: *“Strategy is a course of action for achieving an organisation’s purpose”* (Witt and Meyer, 2005).
- ✓ Definition of Retailing Mix: *“The set of controllable variables that the retailer can use to satisfy the customer’s needs and to influence their buying behavior and compete effectively in the market”* (Gupta and Randhawa, 2008).
- ✓ Definition of Retailing: *“Retailing, the final stage of distribution process, is the business activity that is involved in the sale of goods and services to the consumers for their personal, family, or household use”* (Berman and Evans, 1998).
- ✓ Definition of Status Quo: *“a commonly used form of the original Latin “status quo” - literally “the state in which” - is a [Latin term](http://www.wikipedia.org), meaning the current or existing state of affairs. To maintain the status quo is to keep the things the way they presently are”* (www.wikipedia.org).

1.8 Summary

This chapter had provided a brief overview of the research. It provided the information about the background of the study, the research objectives, the justification of the research and the methodology adopted for the research. The chapter also provided the information about Wilkinson, definition of terms and the structure of the research by listing the subsequent chapters.

Chapter – 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides review and the critical analysis of the literature related to the research. It starts with a brief history of strategy, types of strategy, strategy analysis, then talks about strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategic management in retail sector and then focuses on Blue Ocean Strategy formulation and implementation including some analytical tools and supporting frameworks.

2.1 A Brief History of Strategy

Sun Tzu (500 BC) in his *The Art of War* says that, ‘all combats are based on deception. And all men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved’. In war, objectives can often be clearly defined, and so strategy is thought of as a means to a specific end. This view has persisted in the corporate world where strategies are conceived as plans to accomplish specific goals.

During the 1950s and 1960s, in the business world to overcome the increasing difficulties in coordinating decisions, and maintaining control in the companies that were growing in size and complexity, Corporate planning (also known as *long-term planning*) was introduced. This planning sets goals and objectives forecasted key economic trends (such as market demand, the company’s market share, revenue, cost and margins) and established priorities for products and business areas of the firm etc., for future years. This planning proved particularly useful for developing and guiding the diversification strategies that many large companies were pursuing in the 1960s. But, due to the unexpected oil shocks of 1974 and 1979, and the increased international competition, firms became turbulent and stopped looking at planning or forecasting their investments that far into the future. To overcome this, the emphasis shifted from *planning* to *strategy making*, where the focus was less on the detailed management of company’s growth paths than on positioning the company in the markets and in relation to competitors in order to maximize the potential for profit. This transition from corporate planning to what became termed *strategic management* was associated with increasing focus on competition as the central

characteristic of the business environment and competitive advantage as the primary goal of the strategy (Grant, 2010).

2.1.1 What is Strategy?

“Strategy is a course of action for achieving an organisation’s purpose” (Witt and Meyer, 2005). In the complex world of organisations it must be stated that there is no “best way” to generate strategy and strategic management, and nor is there any “one best form” of an organisation (Mintzberg, Ghoshal and Quinn, 1998). The context in which the strategy is set is therefore of great interest.

Strategy context and content has been discussed and considered of by mankind, since organisations exist to fulfill a purpose and to create value (Schilling, Witt and Meyer, 2005). Strategies are then employed to guarantee that the organisational purpose is realized (Witt and Meyer, 2005). In the strategic literature a split is made between the strategy analysis stage, the strategy formulation stage, and the strategy implementation stage (Thompson and Strickland, 2001; Mintzberg, Ghoshal and Quinn, 1998; Witt and Meyer, 2005). In the analysis stage, strategists recognize the opportunities and threats in the environment, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. Next, in the formulation stage, strategists decide which strategic options that are reachable to them, evaluate each and select one. Lastly, in the implementation stage, the selected strategic option is translated into a number of actual activities, which are then carried out (Witt and Meyer, 2005). Those different stages will be discussed and explained further in the sections below.

For any firm the basic goal is to survive and prosper. In order to survive for a longer period, the firm should earn a rate of return on its capital that exceeds its cost of capital. This is possible only if the firm is located within an industry where overall rates of return are attractive, or the firm attains a position of advantage vis-à-vis its competitors within an industry, allowing it to earn a return in excess of the industry average (Figure 1).

According to Grant (2010), these two sources of superior performance define the two basic levels of strategy within an organisation:

Figure 1: The sources of superior profitability (Grant, 2010)

2.2 Strategy Analysis

The first step in formulating an organisation's strategy is to evaluate its current position and describe its strategic direction for the future. Because, a sound strategy both influences and develops the organisation's existing competitive position, and provides direction for the future development of the organisation. Formulating a strategy first requires an accurate evaluation of where the firm currently is. It then requires an ambitious strategic plan, one that creates a gap between a company's existing resources and capabilities and those necessary to achieve its intent. A company's strategic intent is a long-term goal that is ambitious, builds upon and extends the firm's existing core competencies, and originates from all levels of the organisation (Schilling, 2005).

To assess the firm's current position in the market place, it is useful to begin with some standard tools of strategic analysis for analyzing the external and internal environment of the firm. There are several different tools in the strategic literature but only Porter's (1985) value chain and Ansoff's (1957) matrix were considered for this study. Porter's value chain model is considered because, it talks about creating values and generating profits which are more closely related to the retail organisation. Ansoff's matrix is considered because it offers various strategic options for the organisation. More discussion about these can be found in the following sections.

2.2.1 Porter's value chain

In contradiction to the external analysis, the analysis of the internal environment starts with identifying the firm's strengths and weaknesses. In Michael Porter's (1985) model of value chain (Figure 2), the firm's activities are divided into primary activities and support activities.

Figure 2: Porter's (1985) Value Chain

Primary activities include inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales, and services. Support activities include procurement, human resource management, technology development, and infrastructure (Witt and Meyer, 2005). For a better fit, this model should be adapted to the specific organisation's need. The creation of value chain for the organisation is divided into two phases. *Basic Mapping*, where the information is obtained from basic knowledge and *Adjusted Mapping*, where the information is obtained from interviews and feedbacks of the individuals and organisations that are involved in the analysis process. This value chain analysis helps organisations to evaluate what activities contribute to the overall value of the firm, and then identify the activity's strengths and weaknesses (Witt and Meyer, 2005).

Once the key strengths and weaknesses are recognized, the firm can evaluate which strengths that have the potential to be the source of sustainable competitive advantage. This helps the firm to add knowledge about what activities and resources that should be further leveraged in its articulation of its strategic intent for the future (Schilling, 2005).

2.2.2 Ansoff' Matrix

As cited by Meldrum and McDonald (2007), the Ansoff matrix (figure 3) is a 2 X 2 depiction which was introduced by Igor Ansoff in 'Strategies for Diversification' (Harvard Business Review, September-October 1957, pg. 114). Although old, this matrix remains to be an effective framework as it has a simple framework which provides all the strategic directions that an organisation can adopt.

The matrix essentially focuses on the provision of products to the customers. Irrespective of the organisation's position or industry, the product will be either existing offering or a new offering (product new to the organisation). But in contrast, due to the complexity and its reliance on the disciplines of planning and analysis, Ansoff's Matrix (Figure 3) has not been more generally recognized (Meldrum and McDonald, 2007).

Figure 3: Ansoff's Matrix (1957), Source: Meldrum and McDonald (2007)

Adding to this, Mintzberg (2000) argues that Ansoff's reliance on planning suffers from three misleading notions: that events can be predicted, that strategic thinking can be separated from operational management, and that data analysis and techniques can produce novel strategies.

However, this matrix could be helpful in outlining the range of marketing options open to an organisation and managing the product or brand over its life cycle. That is, it can be used as a tool which provides the alternative methods for the organisation to go in the right strategic direction for achieving its final goal – Growth (Meldrum and McDonald, 2007).

And now, as the strategic direction has been found, the organisation should start formulating its strategy, which is studied in the following section.

2.3 Formulating the Strategy

The process by which a deliberate strategy is created is called strategy formulation. However, intentions sometimes end up not being put into practice; plans can be changed or cancelled along the way. This means that the formulation of the strategy process is an ongoing process. This lays in the management control system that is, or should be the way in which managers follow up and analyze the strategy (Witt and Meyer, 2005).

Anthony and Govindarajan (2001) state that the primary role of management control is to help the strategies execute. The strategy defines the critical success factors and indirect the design and operation of the control system, which in the end results in the thriving implementation of the strategy. In rapid changing environments where the development of new strategies is the right thing to do, management control information could be the key. The authors, Anthony and Govindarajan call this *interactive control* with its major objectives to facilitate the creation of a *learning organisation*, which is crucial to corporate survival. It means, to be able to adjust to the up-and-coming environment, there is a constant search for substitute ways of solving problems by scanning the environment, exchange information and so on. The interaction control is not a separate system but an integral of the management control system. Important to mention is also that the interactive control information usually, but not extensively, tends to be nonfinancial (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2001).

While critical success factors are important when implementing strategy, strategic uncertainties are important when developing new ones. Interpreting the definition provided by Anthony and Govindarajan (2001), these uncertainties are similar to what may be termed as environmental change, such as changes in customer preferences, technologies, competitors etc. In the end it clearly makes sense that these become the basis for managers to adapt to a rapidly changing environment by thinking about new strategies, and then implement those (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2001).

2.4 Implementing the Strategy

In strategic terms according to Katsioloudes (2006), a strategy is about difficult choices and trade-offs; it's about deliberately choosing to be different. When companies abandon strategy, there may not be any problem in short-term but had to face the problems in the long-term, just as most companies of 1990s without a strategy, facing today. However, Katsioloudes argues that, just having a strategy is not sufficient. An effectively developed strategy might remain worthless if it just sits on a shelf in an executive office. In fact, various studies support this view, for example as study reported in the Fortune magazine suggested that 70% of CEOs who fail do so not because of bad strategy, but because of bad execution (Charan and Colvin, 1999). In another study of 200 companies by thetimes100.co.uk, 80% of directors said they had the right strategies, but only 14% thought they were implementing them well, no doubt linked to the finding that despite 97% of directors having a 'strategic vision', only 33% reported achieving 'significant strategic success'. (Cobbold and Lawrie, 2001).

According to Grant (2010), the changing technologies, diverse & mobile workforce, accelerating pace of change, are some of the key factors that should be considered while formulating the strategies as these make strategy implementation difficult. This view is supported by various strategists too. For example, Katsioloudes (2006), states that “to formulate strategies without some serious thoughts toward implementation seems a serious waste of the strategists’ time” and “a strategy is really nothing but a fantasy without successful implementation”.

The simple relationship between strategy formulation and the strategy implementation is shown in the Figure 4. From the figure, it is understood that the poor implementation can cause appropriate strategies to fail, yet excellent implementation can rescue an inappropriate strategy. Hence, concentrating only on the implementation by overcoming the major problems (Katsioloudes, 2006) doesn't mean that, formulation should be neglected.

Figure 4: Interaction of Strategy formulation and implementation.

(Source: “Making Your Marketing Strategy Work”, *Harvard Business Review*, 1984)

The strategic planning process is properly executed only when strategies are implemented. But executing these strategies, when compared to formulation, are much harder due to the organizational hurdles. The successful implementation of the organisation’s strategy depends upon the way in which it addresses the key success factors such as organisation structure, organisation culture and managerial leadership (Springer, 2008).

2.4.1 Organisation Structure as a Strategic Implementation Factor

According to Heide, Gronhaug, and Johannesson (2002), Factors relating to the organisational structure are the second most important implementation barrier. A proper structure-strategy alignment is seen as a precursor to the successful implementation of new business strategies (Noble, 1999). Chandler (1962), in his studies, also found that there is a close link between structural and the strategic inefficiencies. This has made the Chandler to think of strategy as a determinant of structure, and conclude that ‘structure follows strategy’. There are some well-known studies, which had proved this structure-strategy relationship. Stopford and Wells (1972),

study is one such example, which proved that there is a relation between the international strategy of an MNC and its organisational structure. However, this 'structure-strategy' linkage is criticized by many strategists for being *too simplistic*. For example, Morschett, Schramm-Klein, and Zentes (2009) states that, for implementing the organisations structure, companies have a *degree of choice* and this choice of structure is independent of the company's strategy. That is, there is no unidirectional influence of strategy on structure or vice versa, but that corporate strategy and corporate structure have to be aligned to each other with some existing degree of freedom. Nevertheless, the organisational structures are an important mechanism to coordinate the international activities of a company. And as long as company's performance seems acceptable, there is no pressure to make any extensive structural changes (Morschett, Schramm-Klein, and Zentes, 2009). The next step to consider is the organisation culture.

2.4.2 Organisation Culture as a Strategic Implementation Factor

The cultural differences, according to Harris and Moran (2007) might be interesting on any level, but when it comes to strategy implementation, it is more interesting (as well as enlightening). Harris and Moran very eloquently mention that, "Cultural proficiency can facilitate one's coping with the changes of any transitional experience." That is, learning how to manage cultural differences would be a means for all persons to become more flexible and open-minded in their outlook and behavior, as well as more effective personally and professionally. In addition, Kilmann, Saxton, and Serpa (1986), defined organisation culture as, "The philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that knit an organisation together and are shared by employers."

According to Heide, Gronhaug, and Johannesson (2002), the cultural variables indicate what gets done in the organisation and not what should get done. The strategy formulation should somehow be accomplished within the context of prevailing cultural norms. But, this concept raises an interesting question, "Should the organisation's culture be changed in order to support organisational strategy, or should it be the vice-versa?" In short, to paraphrase Chandler's (1962) statement, "Does Culture follow Strategy?" The answer might not be yes, or at the least, not immediately. To support this, Katsioloudes (2006) gives an example, saying that, it is not apparent to expect an A in the calculus without some grounding in mathematics. Similarly,

Cultures should not necessarily meant to be practiced immediately after the strategy creation or formulation. The cultural seeds should be planted organisationally before any strategy can be successfully implemented. Thus, if the organisation decides to pursue a different strategic direction, the existing culture should be changed or a new culture should be practiced as early as possible (Katsioloudes, 2006).

2.4.3 Managerial Leadership as a Strategic Implementation Factor

Szilagyi and Schweiger (1984) states that, all leaders may not necessarily be competent in implementing each and every organisational strategy. But if the objectives are stated correctly and precisely (that is, if they are quantifiable and flow directly from the organisation's strategy), any manager/leader can remain focused in their particular areas which impact the company's growth. However, demonstrating the interest and the involvement of the leader in motivating the employees and driving them along the strategic path of the organisation is the key factor for the successful implementation of the organisational strategy (Katsioloudes, 2006).

Yet, in the current turbulent business environment, Implementation of the organisational strategy is admittedly complex and cannot be ensured of success by simply restructuring, adjusting the culture, or being a "good" leader/manager. It is recommended that all of these things need to be implemented simultaneously (Katsioloudes, 2006).

2.4.4 The Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

To compete in the complex environment, understanding of goals and methods for attaining those goals are very essential for the organisation (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). For this purpose, Kaplan and Norton introduced a tool called Balanced Scorecard (figure 5), which explores the internal capabilities of an organisation.

The BSC is used extensively in various businesses and industries, governments, and nonprofit organisations all over the world to monitor the organisation's performance against strategic goals, to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organisation, and to improve internal and external communications (Kaplan and Norton, 1996).

Figure 5: The Balanced Score Card. (Source: www.balancedscorecard.org)

Although the BSC framework appears to be a good framework for successful implementation of the organisational strategy, it had to face lot of criticisms from various strategists. For example, Ittner and Larcker (2003), states that although many companies successfully adopted the non-financial measurement framework, BSC, they could hardly found the cause and effect links between the measurements and desired outcomes. Norreklit (2003) too argues that, the BSC model is framed only with attractive adjectives and some analogies rather than sound or logical statements. It even fails to talk about the risk and the economic values of the company. However, if the Objectives, Measures, Targets and the Initiatives for the BSC are properly developed and managed to be mutually aligned, the organisational strategic implementation might become successful (Ittner and Larcker, 2003).

Nevertheless, the strategic implementation may slightly differ depending upon the organisation type and the sector it is operating in (Katsioloudes, 2006). Hence, as the current research work is focused on Wilkinson, a retail store, the overview of the strategic management in a retail sector is considered in the following section.

2.5 Overview of Strategic Retail Management

“Over the past two decades, retail industry has shown signs of both highly competitive and markedly innovative. The frequent introductions of new-brands and the widespread use of differentiation have led to increased market segmentation, deeper and broader markets, and the rejuvenation of tired sectors such as hardware retail stores” (Burke, Stel, and Thurik, 2010).

Berman and Evans (1998) defines Retailing, the final stage of distribution process, as the business activity that is involved in the sale of goods and services to the consumers for their personal, family, or household use. Gupta and Randhawa (2008), states that, the retailing strategy which summarizes the goals and objectives of the retailer, will actually be used as a framework to deal with the customers and competitors, and the operating environment. But, due to the intense competition, rapid technology advancements, changing consumer behaviors and other environmental factors, it's not sufficient for the retailer to just focus on the business environment. Instead, they should start focusing on the long-term analysis and the planning which ensures the growth opportunities and helps to avoiding impacts of negative trends (Gupta and Randhawa, 2008).

First, the strategy should be created or formulated as it helps the retailer set the direction of an organisation over the long-term and create sustainable competitive advantage by configuring its resources to meet the customer's needs and stakeholder's expectations. Then, these strategies should be implemented by properly scheduling and coordination of the retail activities, efficiently using the resources, and planning the budget etc (Gupta and Randhawa, 2008). This systematic approach seems to be top-down as the strategy formulation precedes the strategy implementation. But, some strategy writers criticize this view saying that, strategies can emerge without formal planning. For instance, Mintzberg (2000) argues that, as a result of the operational and day-to-day decision making, the strategies can emerge without the explicit

intension of managers. In reality, the strategies could be planned and emergent (unplanned). However, the managers should be alert in formulating the strategies rather than waiting for the strategies to emerge. Hence, the strategic management becomes crucial for long term survival in the fast moving retail environment (Gupta and Randhawa, 2008).

Finally, to flourish, the retailer should please their customer and a strong niche in the market place. And to prosper in the long term, they should have a solid strategic plan and a willingness to adapt to change (Gupta and Randhawa, 2008).

2.6 Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS)

“There is no such thing as a permanently great company, or a permanently great industry. But there are permanently great strategic moves”

- www.blueoceanstrategy.com

It will perhaps be fair to state that competition has always been at the heart of the corporate strategy. As the intensity of competition increases in every sphere of business activity, it is more difficult to talk about strategy without using the terms competitive strategy, building competitive advantages, beating competition etc. On the other side, Innovation is becoming the reigning buzz word. Traditional rules are no longer applied and markets are becoming unpredictable. As a source of sustained growth, Innovation is becoming the key factor for the organisation. Yet, knowing how to best define, systemise the innovation and make it into a successful strategy is far more indescribable (Burt, 2007).

Bain (1956), in his structure-conduct-performance paradigm states that, for an organisation to achieve success by beating the competition, it should mainly focus on the market structure. Here, *market structure*, which talks about the supply and demand conditions, changes the sellers and buyers *conduct* which in turn, results in good *performance* (Scherer, 1970). Using market structure, organisations in the existing market space can hold a defensible position against the competition. To sustain, the organisations need to concentrate on building advantages over the competition, by assessing what the competitors are doing or striving to do better. Then the organisation can make profit by making other organisations lose. Hence, the competition

becomes an important aspect of the organisation's strategy. However, during this stage, organisations have ignored a most important and lucrative aspect of the strategy, *making competition irrelevant by creating a new market place where there are no competitors*, which is called as Blue Ocean (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.6.1 Creating Blue Ocean

Kim and Mauborgne (2005) divide the market universe into two types of oceans: Red Oceans and Blue Oceans as illustrated in the following table (Table 1)

<i>Red Ocean</i>	<i>Blue Ocean</i>
<i>Compete</i> in existing/ known market space	<i>Create</i> an uncontested market space
<i>Beat</i> the competition	<i>Make</i> the competition irrelevant
<i>Utilize</i> the existing demand	<i>Create</i> and capture new demand
<i>Make</i> the Value-Cost trade off	<i>Break</i> the Value-Cost trade off
Focus on <i>either</i> differentiation or low cost	Focus on <i>both</i> differentiation and low cost

Table 1: Red Oceans Vs Blue Oceans (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Industries that exist today are referred to as being in 'known market space' and are represented in the Red Ocean space. Those industries that are nonexistent today are referred to as being in an 'unknown market space' and are represented in the Blue Ocean space (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). According to Kim and Mauborgne (2005), Red oceans indicate that the industry boundaries are properly defined and accepted. The organisations, to grab a bigger share of existing demand, tries to outperform their rivals, as the competitive rules and regulations of the war/game are known. Currently, most of the organisations are following this red ocean approach as a tradition, though it is very difficult to create value. However, after 10 to 20 years, as the industries become mature and structures become less flexible, Blue Ocean would turn into red (Cote, 2005). Nevertheless, it is always very important for the organisations to outcompete the rivals if they want to be in the market space. But if the supply exceeds demand, it becomes difficult to sustain a high performance in the red ocean (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). To overcome this, the organisations should go beyond competing in the already established

industries and grab the growth opportunities. Cirque du Soleil, a Canadian circus company, would be a good example for this. The company has gone beyond competing in the already established circus industries not by taking routine customers: children, but by focusing on a whole new group of customers: adults and corporate clients. So, the organisations must realize that, to win in the future, it must stop competing with each other (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.6.2 Value Innovation: The Cornerstone of BOS

The importance of creating a sustainable competitive advantage has been emphasized by many writers on strategy. For example, Jack Welch, a strategy thinker and a former CEO of General Electrics states that, *“If you don't have a competitive advantage, don't compete”* (Hutchison, 2002). Thinking similarly, Porter (1985), developed a theory that describes the three competitive strategies: Cost-Leadership; Differentiation; and Focus. The cost-leadership theory talks about how to attract the customers by lowering the costs of the products, differentiation theory talks about how to create a high customer value by creating unique products, and the focus strategy talks about how to create the effectiveness advantage by targeting a section of market. However, due to the threat of being “stuck in the middle”, the author stresses on selecting only one strategy. Supporting this view Grant (1991), argues that, if a company tries to follow many strategies simultaneously, it may lose its focus and the competitive advantage.

Extending the idea of Prof. Charles W. L. Hill (1988), to combine the differentiation and cost leadership (Anonymous, 2007), Kim and Mauborgne (2005) created Value Innovation (Figure 6), which describes about innovating value to unlock new demand by the simultaneous pursuit of low cost and differentiation.

Figure 6: The simultaneous pursuit of differentiation and low-cost
(Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

It is created in the region (shaded above) where a company's actions favorably affect both its cost structure and its value proposition to buyers. Cost savings are obtained by eliminating and reducing the factors that the industry competes on. Buyer Value is lifted up by raising and creating elements the industry has never offered. Over time, costs are reduced further because of high sales volumes that superior value generates (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005; Burt, 2007).

2.6.3 Analytical Tools and Frameworks

In an attempt to make the formulation and execution of BOS as systematic and actionable as red ocean's, Kim and Mauborgne (2005) has designed some of the tools and frameworks that are discussed in the following sections.

2.6.3.1 Strategy Canvas

The initial step, according to Kim and Mauborgne, (2005), in the creation of BOS is to draw a Strategy Canvas of the organisation. It acts both as a diagnostic and a framework for action to build a compelling BOS. This strategy canvas helps the organisation to understand its current

state, to understand the factors that the industry is currently competing on and to understand what customers receive from existing competitive offerings (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). An example of a strategy canvas for the iPhone is shown below (Figure 7);

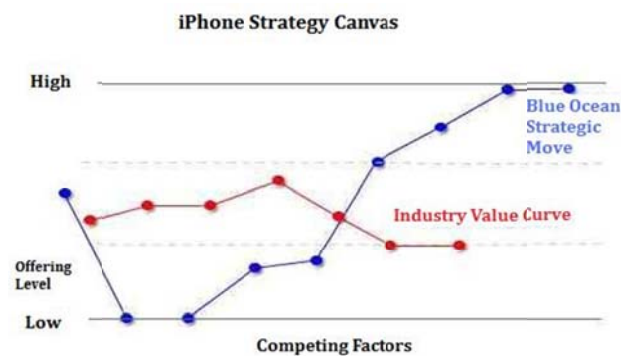


Figure 7: The Strategy Canvas of iPhone

(Source: <http://www.christiandelrosso.org/blog/iphone-disruptive-innovation/>).

The horizontal axis contains range of factors that the industry competes on and invests in. The vertical axis contains the offering levels that the customers receive. A high score implies that, the company offers more to the buyers. Value Curve, the plot drawn between the current offerings and the competing factors, depicts the company's relative performance across its industry's competing factors (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). This proposition is not without its critics. Pollard (2005) argues that, although this value curve talks about strategy, it fails to consider marketing which is an integral part of the strategy. Currently, there is an ongoing debate on this issue in the strategic literature. However for the purpose of this study the focus is primarily on the implementation of Blue Ocean strategy at Wilkinson. It is therefore presumed that there is an effective market strategy that helps Wilkinson increase its market share and defend its position from its competitors.

2.6.3.2 The Four Actions Framework

The Four Actions framework (Figure 8), according to Kim and Mauborgne (2005) is used to reconstruct the buyer value elements in crafting a new value curve. This framework asks the below four key questions to the organisation about its strategic logic or business model:

- What factors, that are taken for granted even though they no longer have value, can be eliminated?
- Are the companies over-serving the customers, increasing their cost structure for no gain?
- Does the company eliminate the compromises that an industry forces the customers to make?
- Does the company discover new value to the customers by creating demand?

Figure 8: The 4-Actions Framework, (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Answering these questions helps the organisation to systematically explore the buyer value elements across alternative industries to offer an entirely new experience to the buyers, by simultaneously lowering its costs. The US wine industry is the best example for this. By creating a wine, *Yellow Tail*, as a social drink accessible to every type of alcohol drinker, US based company, Casella wines, had created a blue ocean and emerged as the fastest growing brand in the USA and Australian wine industry (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). But in contrast, Pollard (2005) argues that this framework and the concept are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Moreover, it is just used to ask the four questions (mentioned above) to the managers, but not

making those managers to act on it. So, a supplementary tool called E-R-R-C grid (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005) is used which is studied in the next section.

2.6.3.3 The E-R-R-C Grid

This Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create (ERRC) grid (Figure 9), according to Kim & Mauborgne (2005), can be used to take the required actions for the problems or issues that managers found by using the four actions framework.

Eliminate	Reduce
Raise	Create

Figure 9: The Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create Grid, (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Filling this grid, gives some important benefits such as

- It drives the companies to simultaneously follow low cost and differentiation
- It immediately flags companies that focus only on raising and creating
- It helps companies to re-think about their cost structure, product/service design
- It makes discover the range of hidden assumptions made in competing.

In case of Cirque du Soleil (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005), the ERRC grid was like in figure 10. Thus, the frameworks and tools studied are the essential analytics that can be used, along with the six principles of formulating and implementing the blue ocean strategy, to break the competition and create a blue ocean of uncontested market space (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Figure 10: The Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create Grid of Cirque du Soleil
(Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.7 Minimizing Risk and Maximizing Opportunities

Some strategy thinkers would perceive that the BOS idea may be more risky. But in fact, it is not a riskless strategy, that is, BOS is not about risk taking, it's about risk minimisation. Nevertheless, any red ocean organisation to create and capture Blue Ocean, principally face the following six key issues which revolve around the strategy formulation and implementation (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

- 1. Search Risk** - addresses how to successfully identify the compelling blue ocean opportunities out of the complicated red ocean opportunities that exist today.
- 2. Planning Risk** – addresses how to lessen the investments of efforts and time
- 3. Scope Risk** – addresses how to aggregate the greatest demand for a new offering.
- 4. Business Model Risk** – addresses how to build a robust business model that fetch healthy profits.
- 5. Organisational Risk** – addresses how to overcome the organisational hurdles
- 6. Management Risk** – addresses how to motivate people to the best of their abilities.

The considerations of these six risk factors make the formulation and execution of blue ocean strategy more systematic and actionable, thus leading the organisations to maximise the opportunities and minimise the risk (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.8 Blue Ocean Strategy Formulation

According to Kim and Mauborgne (2005), the six principles of BOS help companies to guide through its growth path by systematically reducing the risks associated (listed above) and maximizing the opportunities available. The first four principles are associated with the blue ocean strategy formulation.

2.8.1 Reconstruct Market Boundaries

This principle is used for identifying the paths that are available for the managers to systematically create the uncontested market space across various industry domains. It helps the organisation minimize its search risk. For the organisations, to open up commercially important blue oceans by making the competition irrelevant, it suggests to focus on six conventional boundaries of the competition. These six paths focus on looking across alternative industries, looking across strategic groups within industries, looking across the chain of buyers, looking across complementary product and service offerings, looking across functional or emotional appeal to buyers, and looking across the time (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). The biggest telecommunications success, NTT DoCoMo's i-mode, in Japan is the best example which proves this principle. NTT DoCoMo's approach of creating Blue Ocean (creating wireless transmission text, data and pictures along with voice) came by thinking about why people trade-across the alternatives of mobile phones and the internet.

2.8.2 Focus on the big picture, not the numbers

This principle demonstrates how to design an organisation's strategic planning process to go beyond incremental improvements to create value innovations.

Table 2: The Four steps of Visualizing the Strategy
(Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Although, being criticised as a number-crunching exercise that keeps the organisations locked into making incremental improvements, it can be used as an alternative to the existing strategic planning process by minimizing the planning risks. An example of organisation which followed this principle and achieved success is a 150 year old European Financial Services group, which almost yielded a 30% revenue increase in its initial year (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

This visualizing approach which contains a four step process as detailed above (Table 2), can be used by the managers to focus on big picture rather than submerged numbers (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.8.3 Reach beyond existing demand

In order to create a market of new demand, managers must challenge the existing practice of aiming the finer segmentation to better meet existing customer preferences. Moreover, this

practice results in small target markets. But this third principle, rather than focusing on the differences that separate the customers, helps aggregating the demand by making the organisations build powerful commonalities across non customers (Figure 13) to maximize the size of the blue ocean being created and new demand being unlocked (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Figure 11: The Three tiers of noncustomers, (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Focusing on this principle helps the organisation reduce its scaling risk (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

2.8.4 Get the strategic sequence right

The fourth and the last principle in the formulating the BOS is getting the strategic sequence right (Figure 12). This principle helps the organisations to build a robust business model to ensure that the organisation make a healthy profit on its blue ocean idea.

Figure 12: The Sequence of Blue Ocean Strategy, (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

When the organisations start meeting these requirements of utility, price, cost and adoption, they can overcome the risks associated with the organisations business models and the thought of Blue Ocean would become commercially viable (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

2.9 Blue Ocean Strategy Implementation

The organisations, like individuals, often face difficulty while translating thoughts into actions, whether in Red or in Blue Ocean. According to Kim and Mauborgne (2005), during this translation phase, managers face four types of organisation hurdles. The fifth principle of the BOS deals with these organisation hurdles which are studied in the following section.

2.9.1 Overcome Key Organisation Hurdles

Kim and Mauborgne (2005) states that the organisation's hurdles are of four types (Figure 13).

Figure 13: The Organisational hurdles, (Source: Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Although all organisations face different degrees of these hurdles, or at least the subset of four, knowing how to succeed over them is the key to overcome the organisational risks. The cognitive hurdle can be overcome by waking employees up to the need for a strategic shift. Traditionally, the greater the shift in strategy, the greater the resources need to execute it. But blue ocean strategy helps cut the resources rather than rise. Motivating the key staff to move fast and firmly to carry out a break from the status quo is an important and time taking task, which managers should focus. And finally, the organisation has to take full precautions of not raising any political issues, internal or external, in order to successfully execute the blue ocean strategy (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

2.9.2 Build Execution into Strategy

The sixth and the final principle of BOS according to Kim and Mauborgne, (2005) is to build execution into strategy. An organisation to become a great and consistent executor must align all its members, irrespective of their level, around a strategy and make them support it. Overcoming the organisational hurdles to strategy execution is an important step towards that end. But in the end, an organisation needs to raise the attitudes and the behavior of its members, which otherwise would result in the failure of the strategy and in turn the organisation.

This principle helps the organisation build its people's trust and commitment, and inspire their voluntary cooperation, by simultaneously minimizing the management risks of distrust, noncooperation etc. Finally, Kim and Mauborgne (2005) recommend that, if all the six principles of BOS are strictly followed, any organisation can create a blue ocean with an uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant.

But, as another side of a coin, there are more criticisms on BOS which are discussed in the following section.

2.10 Criticisms on Blue Ocean Strategy

Although Kim and Mauborgne (2005), propose various approaches to find uncontested market space, currently there are only few success stories of the companies who applied their theories (www.wapedia.mobi). According to the website, this drawback persists despite the publication of Value Innovation concept since 1990s. And moreover, the authors of BOS first presented the successful innovations and then explained their blue ocean perspective which essentially interpreting success through their lenses.

Kim and Mauborgne (2005), based on almost twenty years of research, used 150 successful strategic moves from 120 years of business history and across 30 industries to bring the BOS theory to life. But this research has been criticized on several grounds. Some of the claims were,

no control group was used for the research, no information about the failures of the companies that used the blue ocean strategy, not following a deductive process etc.

Pollard (2005) states that, brand and communication in BOS are taken for granted and do not represent a key for success. Pollard argues that, the authors Kim and Mauborgne (2005), had taken the marketing of a value innovation as a given, assuming that the marketing success will come.

It is argued, according to (www.wapedia.mobi), that rather than a theory, BOS is an extremely successful attempt to brand a set of already existing concepts and frameworks with a highly "sticky" idea. The blue ocean/red ocean analogy is a powerful and memorable metaphor, which is responsible for its popularity. This metaphor can be powerful enough to stimulate people to action. However, the concepts behind the BOS (such as the competing factors, the consumer cycle, non-customers, etc.) are not new. Many of these tools are also used by Six Sigma practitioners and proposed by other management theorists.

Chapter – 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to address the research issue, including the research philosophy, the research strategy, the research instruments and the factors for ethical considerations.

Epistemology, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), is concerned with the acceptable knowledge in a field of study. Saunders et. al (2009) divides the epistemological stances into *Positivist*, *Realist*, and *Interpretivist (Phenomenologist)*. A positivist prefers working with a visible social reality resulting in a law-like generalization similar to those produced by natural scientists. A realist also prefers to enquire scientifically. A realist believes that, a truth is what the senses show us as reality. An interpretivist admits that, it is important to understand the differences between humans in our role as social actors. This highlights the differences between conducting research among people rather than objects.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The philosophy for this research is closely related to the interpretivist paradigm, because the interpretivism, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2009), is concerned with the way people interpret the social roles in their everyday life in accordance with the meaning they provide to these roles and the way they interpret the social roles of others in accordance with their own set of meanings. On the other side Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2009) argue that, it becomes vital for researchers to adopt a simple approach, enter the social world of their research subjects and understand their view of the world.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2009), emphasize that axiology, a branch of philosophy that studies judgements about values, is very important for a researcher. They state that, the researcher's own values playing in all stages of the research process, is of great importance in making the research results credible. Supporting this, Fisher (2007) states that, unless the

researcher has an insightful knowledge of his/her own values and thinking processes, he/she cannot understand how others may make sense of things.

The researcher's values and knowledge of strategy, in context of retail management, were strongly aligned to those of the Wilkinson, so there was an inevitable element of subjectivity in the study which was considered throughout the research process. In epistemological terms, the study is focused on the collection of qualitative and numerical data.

3.3 Research Strategy

The research was developed based on the research aims which are related to the examination of the strategic management of Wilkinson. Accordingly, the researcher's theoretical (academic) knowledge and the practical experience gained as an employee of Wilkinson, was also considered.

Following the consideration of the research issue, the researcher identified a preference for an interpretivist research philosophy. The reason behind this selection was, the researcher had to interpret the responses of others, the participants, in Wilkinson according to his own set of meanings and actions. Hence, the researcher identified a preference for a blend of qualitative data through semi-structured face-to-face interviews and numerical data through online questionnaire, and decided as the most appropriate strategy to the achievement of the research aims.

3.3.1 Justification of the selected paradigm and methodology

If the research is operated in the interpretive paradigm and the approach used for the research is largely inductive, then the research would be based on the qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The research methodology and the use of questionnaires reflect the exploratory nature of the research question and are justified by the researcher's philosophical preferences.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with the managers in order to collect the data. A justification of this approach can be found in the Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009)'s discussion of research methods. According to Saunders et. al, the semi-structured face-to-face interviews are very useful for exploratory studies and can sometimes be used in explanatory studies. The important topics covered in this semi-structured face-to-face interview were related

to competitive environment and the strategies for managing competition. However, because of the time constraints and the unavailability of the resources, the number of these interviews conducted was less. So an alternative method to evaluate the perceptions of the research issues, the researcher had provided a laptop in the staff room of Wilkinson.

3.3.2 Rejected Methods

The researcher considered the issues related to the use of group interviews in order to obtain the perspective of the larger number of employees. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) states that, although group interactions may lead to a highly productive discussion, certain participants may try to dominate the interview whilst others being idle. The authors argue that, this may create unreliable data. This would have been a major concern in this study because of the possible existence of power imbalances between store heads and the floor staff. Hence, the usage of group interviews was not considered.

3.4 Research Design

The key reason for undertaking this research in Wilkinson is the idea of the researcher to conduct the exploratory study based on the collection of the qualitative data from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the managers. The purpose of interviews would be examining strategic management approaches.

3.4.1 Design of Research Instruments

This research study was conducted by making use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews and the questionnaire. These research instruments were designed to collect or gather the qualitative data related to the research issue and the research aims, which would subsequently analyzed.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

A set of interview questions, related to the research, are derived from literature review and are used during the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the managers. These questions can be found in the **appendix** section. However, more responses were obtained from questionnaire, which is discussed in the following section.

3.4.3 The Questionnaire

A set of questions, whose responses are rated by the participants, were used to collect data using the *Likert-style rating scale* (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The paper based questionnaire were designed and created. The created questionnaire was then provided to the manager and four other staff members of Wilkinson, naming it as *Pilot-Testing*, in order to find out the comfort level of answering the questions. After the pilot testing, the researcher had decided to take this questionnaire online, because of the threat of losing the data. Then with some modifications, the survey questionnaire was re-created online in a website named www.surveyconsole.com. The questionnaire included different types of questions such as, likert-style rating questions (with options 1 – Strongly disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3- Cannot say; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree), multiple answer questions, and open text questions for feedback etc. After creating the questionnaire, its web-link, www.wilkostrategicassessment.surveyconsole.com, with an explanatory letter (Appendix) has been sent to the electronic-mail addresses of co-employees and the employees at other branches of Wilkinson. The questionnaire (Appendix) is aimed to find out the current strategic approach of Wilkinson and check the opportunities for implementing the BOS.

3.5 Research Procedures

The researcher contacted the then store manager for getting the permission to carry out the research study and gained access to the corporate website and other documents of Wilkinson. The purpose and the nature of the study have been clearly explained and sought the permission to approach various staff members of Wilkinson. The same was explained to the new and current store manager and retained the permission.

3.5.1 Administration of the Research Instruments

First of all, after receiving a formal confirmation from Wilkinson to perform the research, the researcher had contacted the relevant managers of other branches through email and explained all the important aspects that are related to the study. It was informed that the semi-structured face-to-face interviews would be conducted in order to find their views about the research topic. And also, before the start of the interview, managers were given an overview of the research issue.

Secondly, the web-link of the questionnaire that was sent to the participants was stored using a secure username and password. All the responses received were saved in a separate folder created in the website. Simultaneously, the day-to-day statistics of the responses were downloaded onto the researcher's personal computer system. The researcher having a background of Information Technology has sufficient knowledge of solving the issues online. But until the questionnaire link was made de-activated, there were no issues from participants.

3.5.2 Reliability of the Data

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), the lack of standardization in the semi-structured face-to-face interviews may lead to concerns about reliability and particularly in interviewer bias. Supporting this, Holloway (1997) states that, the researcher acts as an important instrument in the entire research process as they can influence the study both positively and negatively depending upon the situations. The researcher's own values and definitions of strategy in terms of the retail strategic management were strongly aligned to those of Wilkinson. Therefore, the researcher's own perspective about the research topic presented a degree of subjectivity which was considered during the process of conducting interviews and in analyzing the data that was collected.

It is very important to create a record of an interview and its related data immediately after it has taken place (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This helped the researcher to control the bias and produce a reliable data analysis. If on the other side it was not implemented, the data could have been mixed up. Although Fisher (2007), states that every researcher undertaking a semi-structured face-to-face interview will normally prefer to audio/video record the interview, but the researcher has decided not to use one. He believes that relying on his skill and strength is better than relying on an audio/video recorder. Hence, the researcher opted usage of his keyboard skills. The interviewees were pre-informed about this method of note taking and had their acceptance.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher has considered possible and relevant ethical issues throughout the study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), one of the key stages for consideration of the possible ethical problems is when a researcher seeks access to an organisation. However, in this study, as the researcher belongs to Wilkinson, he managed to address this vital consideration by getting prior approval for the research.

This study did not consider the participation of Wilkinson's customers, so there were no ethical considerations of customer confidentiality. However, the issues related to the privacy of the staff who participated in the study and the ways of collection of data has been duly considered. According to Fisher (2007), the issue of informed consent is a key issue in the research ethics. The researcher however did not prepare any formal participation information sheet or a consent form, but provided an overview of the research study before every interview.

At the start of the interview, the interviewee was informed that all their information would be confidential. And also, it was made clear to the interviewees that, the interview is entirely voluntary. In the sense, they had the right not to answer to any question or can drop off the interview at any stage.

Finally, during the entire research process, proper care was taken to check that the interviewees were comfortable and happy to proceed.

3.7 Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the methodology used for the current study. The research philosophy that supports the research has been referred. The research strategy used for performing this research has been explained and justified. A proper discussion of the research design, research instruments, and the research procedures are described. And finally, the ethical considerations were discussed.

Chapter – 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the information about the key findings of the study, and these findings are based on the data gathered from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the managers, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with co-employees, questionnaires and some secondary data gathered from Wilkinson website and its annual reports. This chapter provides an outline of the data that was gathered, an explanation and the justification of the methods used for data analysis and a discussion of the findings.

4.2 Overview of the Data

The research instruments were designed to gather data related to the current strategic approach of Wilkinson and to find the BOS implementation opportunities. The data has been collected in the form of semi structured face-to-face interviews with the managers, semi structured face-to-face interviews with the co-employees and the online questionnaires. There were eighteen questions in the in the interview with the managers and thirty two questions in the online questionnaire. The online responses have been collected throughout the active period of the questionnaire. Here, the active period (30 days for this research) is the period of the license to conduct the survey online in the surveyconsole.com. The data in the form of responses has been collected from four different branches of Wilkinson. The data has been obtained from employees at varying levels - Managers; Assistant Managers; Supervisors; Till Supervisors; Admin Supervisors; Section Leaders; and Customer Service Executives (Floor Staff).

For analyzing Wilkinson's current strategic management, the researcher used a tool called "*Strategic Quotient*" (adopted from strategy4u.com) which helps in understanding the strategic planning of the organisations. The questions of the strategic quotient were rephrased and then made specific to Wilkinson.

4.3 Analysis of Participants and Respondents

The research has been conducted in four different branches of Wilkinson. The participants (Figure 14) in the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were two store managers and one assistant store manager. The three managers had worked for Wilkinson for more than ten years. These managers have also participated in a survey conducted through questionnaires.

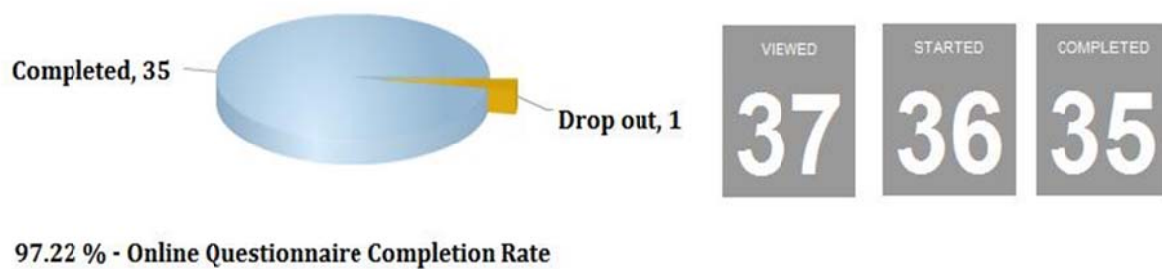


Figure 14: Response Rate of the Survey

The Questionnaires were distributed to twelve supervisors who were selected from the organisation's staff list provided by the researcher's store manager. These supervisors include seven floor supervisors, four till supervisors, and an administration supervisor. All these supervisors had been working for Wilkinson for over five years.

Seventeen customer service executives along with three section leaders were selected at random from the staff lists of Wilkinson. All these members have been working for Wilkinson for more than two years.

Most of the participants completed the questionnaire without stating their name. Yet, these questionnaires were included in the researched data analysis, as it was decided that not knowing the names of the participants did not negate the responses that have been provided. Although most of the questions are *Likert-Style Rating* questions, there were some questions which ask participants to provide the response in the form of text (writing comments). But many participants have left these questions unanswered. However, the content of the questions were designed in such a way that their intended responses were clear, so the uncompleted questionnaires were also considered for the analysis.

4.4 Findings

The collected data from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the managers and the online questionnaires about Wilkinson has been analysed and clustered into the following:

- Finding-1: Customers Shopping at Wilkinson
- Finding-2: Current Competitive Position
- Finding-3: Strategy Formulation
- Finding-4: Strategy Execution
- Finding-5: Current Strategic Canvas
- Finding-6: Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create factors for BOS implementation
- Finding-7: Differentiation focus and/or Cost-cutting focus
- Finding-8: Approach to Industry Boundaries
- Finding-9: Existing market space Vs new Untapped market space

Narrative Overview of Finding-1: Customers Shopping at Wilkinson

According to one of the interviewed managers, the corporate strategy of Wilkinson is “*to deliver the quality retail goods through excellence in customer service at the lowest possible price*”. A similar response was obtained from the online questionnaire survey. For the question ‘*Why customers shop at Wilkinson?*’, 63.36% of participants had given the answer as Low costs and Customer Service Quality (34.65 % of participants had chosen Low costs, 28.71% of participants had chosen Customer Service Quality) (Figure 15).

Although Wilkinson states that, it provides discounts and promotional offers every day (Annual Report, 2010), only 16.83% of participants had believed it as the reason for the customers shopping at Wilkinson. The type of products, own-brand and the non-own brand products, also attract the customers but to a less extent compared to the other three factors mentioned above. In figures, 7.92% and 11.88% of participants believe own-brand and non-own brand products respectively.



Figure 15: Customers Shop at Wilkinson

Narrative Overview of Finding-2: Current Competitive Position

To understand the current competitive position of Wilkinson, the researcher had considered five factors – Growing faster; focus on identified target market; need for a strategic shift; effectiveness of the current business strategy; flexibility to new trends (Figure 16).

To understand the growth of Wilkinson, the question ‘*In UK, does Wilkinson is growing faster than any other store in the retail industry?*’ has been asked to the participants. In response, 58.82% of participants agreed (and strongly agreed) that the organisation is competent and growing faster. But, only less than half of the participants (37.14% and 2.86%) believed that Wilkinson focuses on the identified target market. For this, 42.86% of participants had believed that there is a need for a strategic shift.

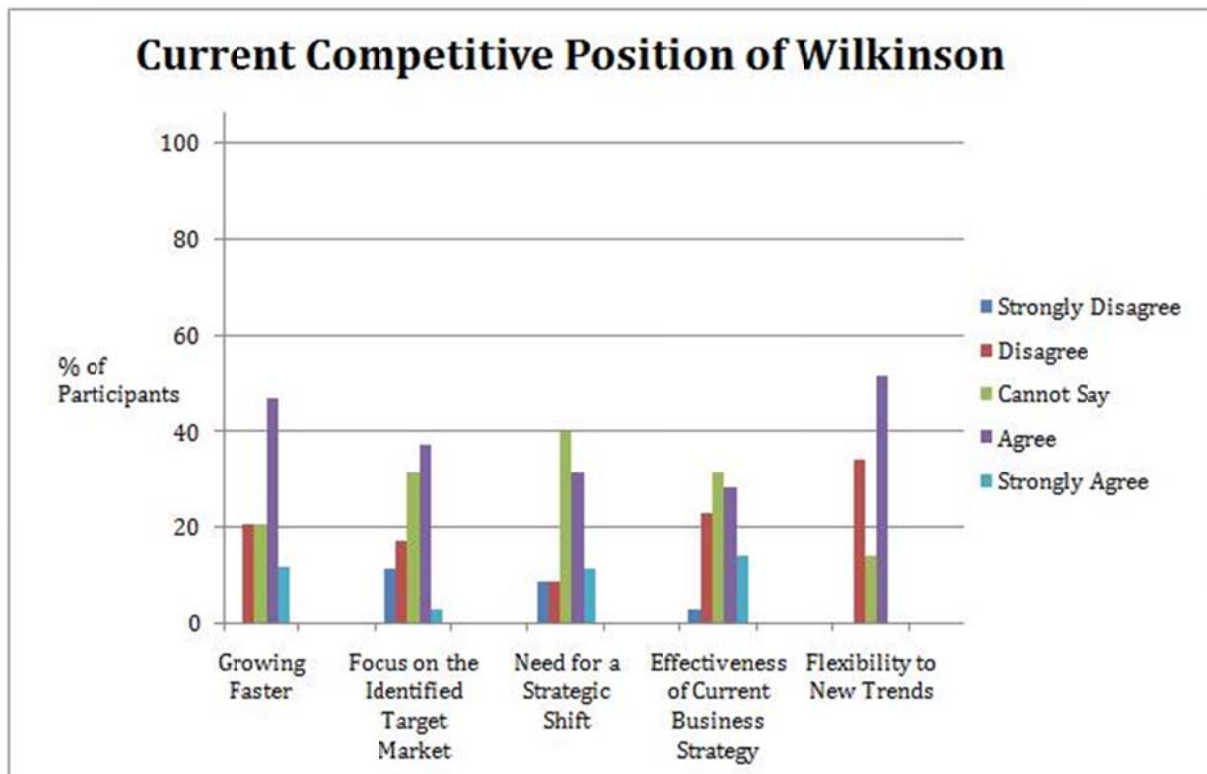


Figure 16: Current Competitive Position

However, this shift is depended on how effective the current business strategy is. Almost 31.43% of participants are in dilemma about the effectiveness of the current business strategic implementation, and only 25.72% of participants believe that there is no need to change the current business strategy. Finally, more than half (51.43%) of the participants believe that Wilkinson is more flexible to new trends in the industry, which could be helpful in being competent.

Narrative Overview of Finding-3: Strategy Formulation

To effectively formulate a strategy, the researcher had considered three factors: Clear Target Markets; Knowledge of Profit Margins; and the knowledge of the competitor's strengths, weaknesses and strategies. From the online questionnaire survey, the researcher had observed that almost half (48.57%) of the participants had believed that Wilkinson has a clear target market (Figure 17). A majority of the participants (68.57%) assume that Wilkinson has a good knowledge of the profit margins for each of its product/market segments. However, focusing

only on the profit margins may not be a good idea as it focuses only the sales, not competition or overcoming its competitor. Then, to know about the competitor's strengths, weakness etc, the question '*Wilkinson is well aware of the strengths, weaknesses, and strategies of its competitors*' has been included in the questionnaire. For this, only 17.15% of the

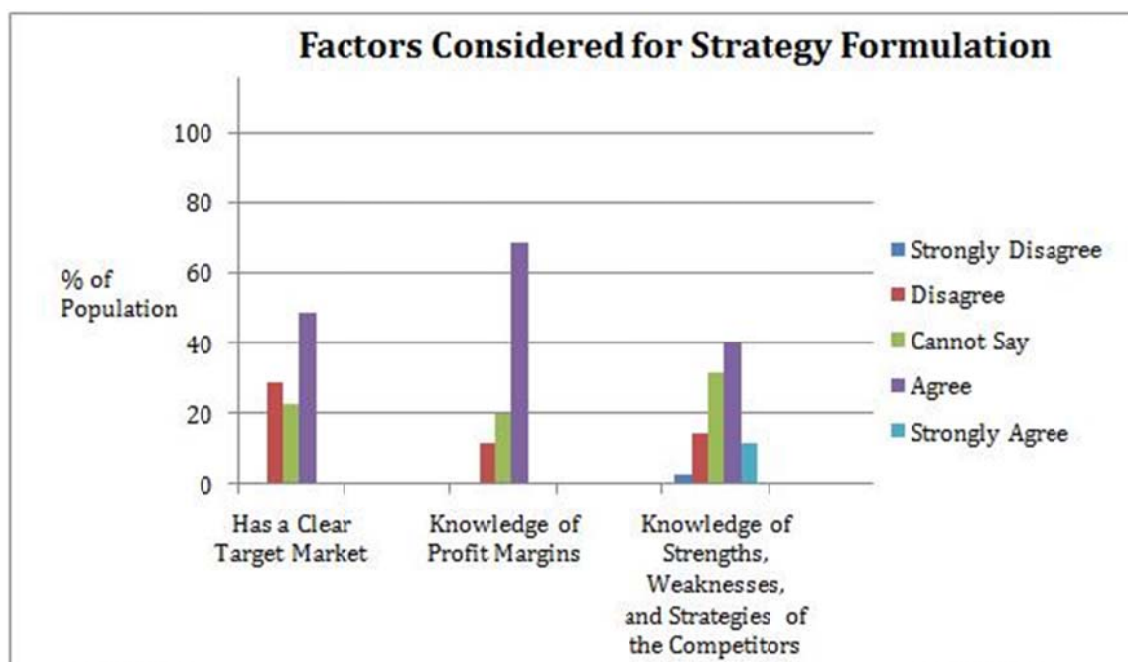


Figure 17: Factors considered for studying Strategy Formulation

participants had an objection. This could be a good and positive sign for an effective formulation of strategy.

Narrative Overview of Finding-4: Strategy Implementation

To find, whether Wilkinson is effectively implementing the strategy, the researcher had included questions about the business strategy, creativity and innovation, change in the business strategy, manager's motivation to staff, and availability of different strategies.

Interestingly, although 42.86% of participants said that there is a need to change the current business strategy of Wilkinson (Figure 18), more than half (54.29%) of the participants believe that Wilkinson has a clear, simple and easy to understand business strategy.

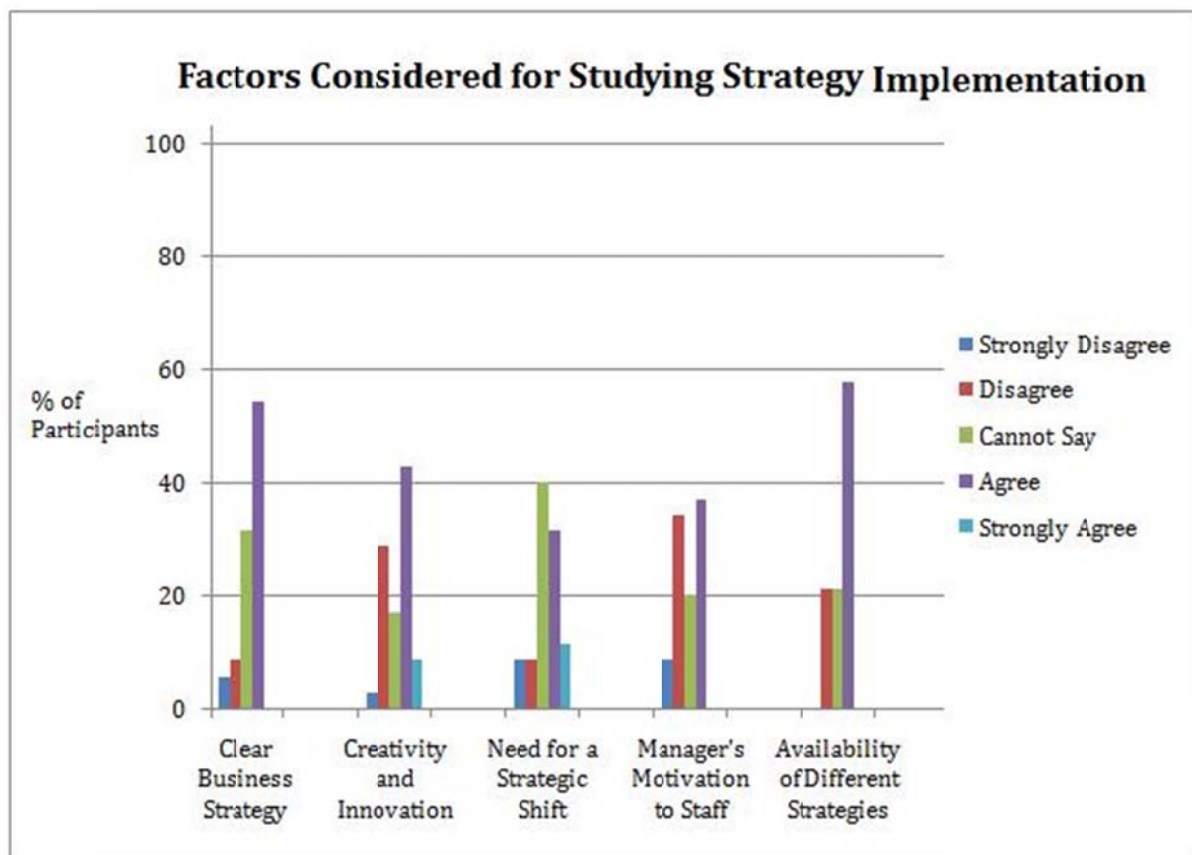


Figure 18: Factors considered for studying the Strategy Implementation

Creativity and Innovation might be in the strategic design or products/services, 51.43% of the participants believe that it is present in Wilkinson. For effectively implementing the strategies and overcoming its competitors, the researcher considered the availability of different strategies as an important factor. So, a question '*Wilkinson has different strategies to beat the competitors and/or be in the competition*' has been included in the questionnaire. For which there was a positive response from 57.58% of participants. For other factors such as, need for a strategic shift and manager's motivation to staff had a positive response from 17.14% and 37.14% respectively.

Narrative Overview of Finding-5: Current Strategy Canvas

To understand the current position of Wilkinson, the researcher had decided to draw a canvas named as Strategy Canvas by considering the various competing factors such as: Differentiation focus, Cost-cutting focus, Threat from the competitors of the own(retail) industry, Threat from the competitors of the other industries, New to the world services, adapt to trends, and shape new

trends. 24.24% of participants believe that there is a differentiation focus in the organisation. A majority of 72.73% of participants believe that Wilkinson is strongly focused on cutting its unnecessary costs.

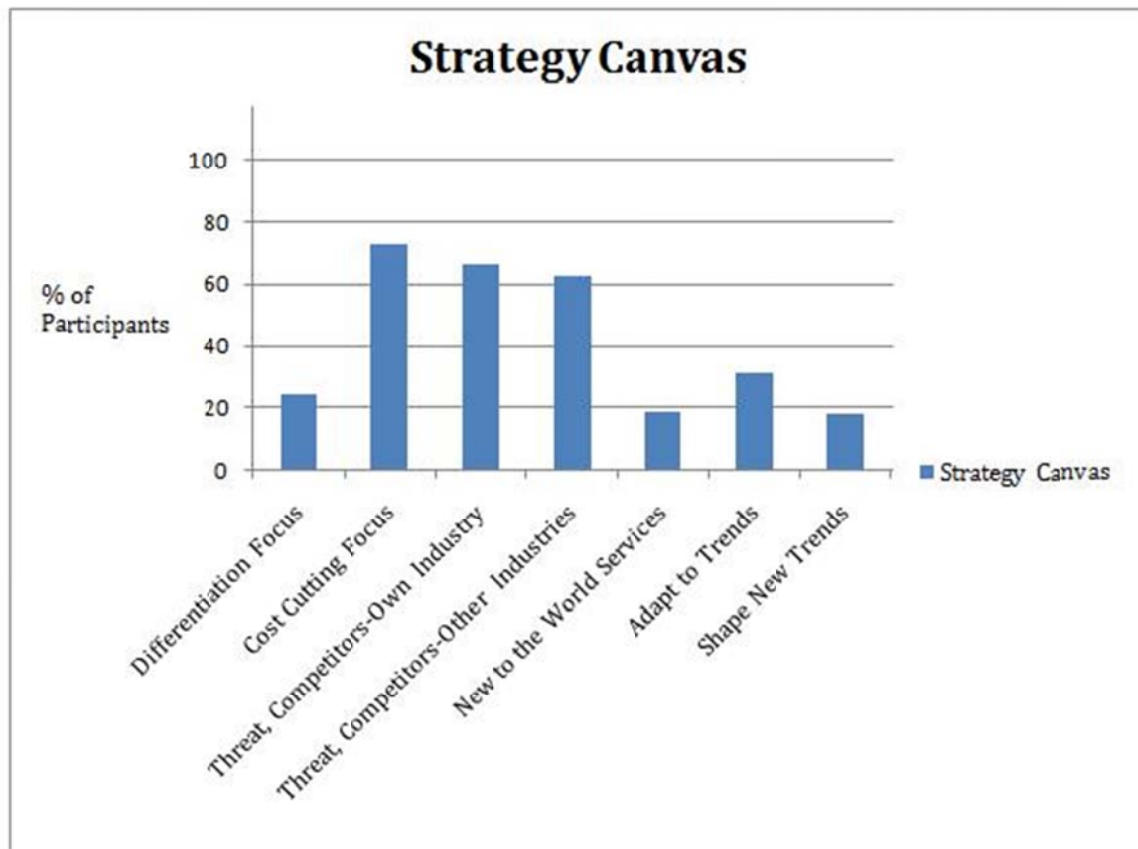


Figure 19: Strategy Canvas to find the current position of the Organisation

Almost same (66.66% and 62.50%) number of participants believe that there is a threat from both the competitors of the own industry and the competitors of other industries. 18.75% of participants believe that Wilkinson is focusing on providing new to the world services. To sustain in the market, 18.18% of participants believe that Wilkinson shape (create) the new trends and 31.24% of participants believe that it adapts to new trends. By using these values, with the competing factors on X-axis and percentage of participants on Y-axis, a graph/canvas has been drawn as shown in the Figure 19.

Narrative Overview of Finding-6: Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create factors for BOS implementation

According to Kim and Mauborgne (2005), for effectively implementing and reconstructing the buyer value elements in crafting a new value curve, the Eliminate, Reduce, Raise, Create factors are to be considered. To find out these factors, the researcher had included questions (with multiple answer choice) related to them. The responses from the participants are shown in the below table 3.

Eliminate	Reduce
Outdated Policies - 50.00 %	Stock Loss (wastes) - 42.86 %
Underperforming Stores - 31.25 %	Unnecessary Costs - 35.06 %
Elderly Staff members - 15.62 %	Non-own brand products - 10.39 %
Others - 3.12 %	Number of Staff members - 10.39 %
Raise	Create
Customer Service Standards - 24.53 %	Kiosk Shopping (In store & External) - 29.25 %
Advertising Standards - 23.58 %	Buyer-Specific stores - 21.70 %
Own brand products - 18.87 %	Franchising - 21.70 %
Young and Talented staff - 18.87 %	Theme-Oriented
Usage of environmental friendly products - 14.15 %	Store design - 17.92 %
	Periodic Payments - 9.43 %

Table 3: Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create factors for BOS implementation

Narrative Overview of Finding-7: Differentiation focus and/or Cost-cutting focus

The main aim of this research is to study the current strategic approach of Wilkinson and suggest BOS, if not followed. For implementing this BOS, differentiation focus and the cost-cutting focus are the base points (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). For this purpose, the researcher had included the questions related to the differentiation and cost-cutting factors. The question related

to differentiation was ‘*Wilkinson has its own niche in the market/ Wilkinson tries to offer services different from other organisations*’, for which there was a positive response from 24.24% of participants.

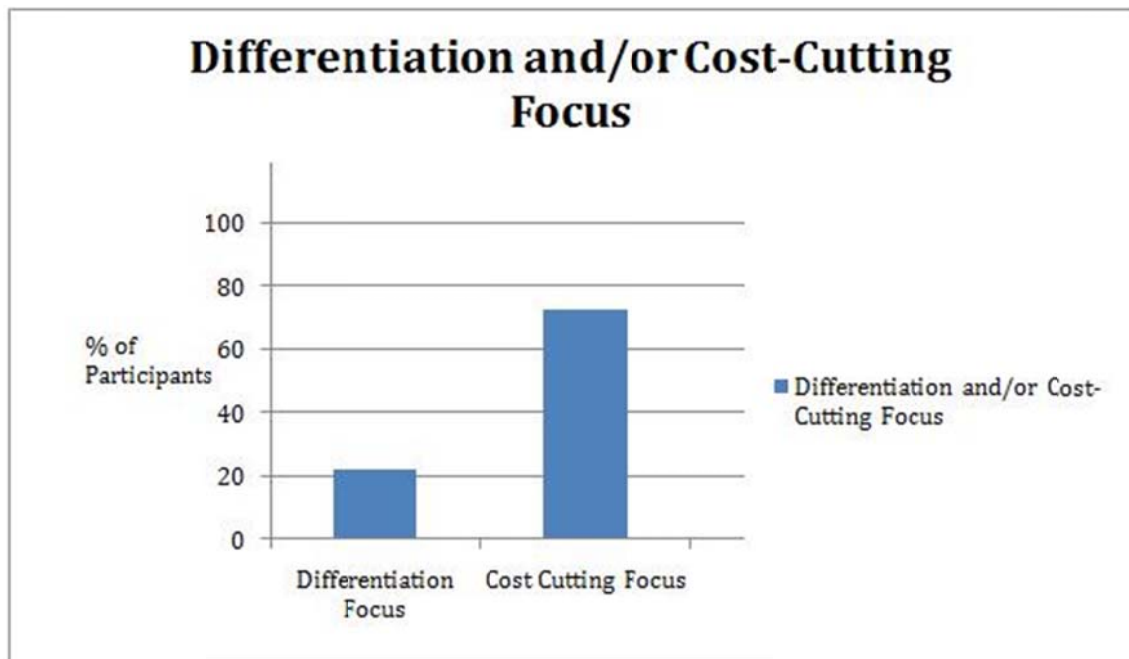


Figure 20: Differentiation and/or Cost-Cutting Focus

Similarly, for the question related to cost-cutting, ‘*Wilkinson is trying to cut its costs*’ 72.72% had responded positively. These values are plotted on a graph as shown in the below figure 20. Where X-axis represents the differentiation and the cost cutting factors and the Y-axis represents the percentage of the participants. From the figure, it can be observed that Wilkinson is more focusing on cost-cutting than differentiating itself.

Narrative Overview of Finding-8: Approach to Industry Boundaries

To create a blue ocean by breaking the competition, the creation or the reconstruction of the market boundaries has to be implemented (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). To discover whether there were any systematic patterns for reconstructing industry boundaries, the researcher had considered to study the threats from its competitors.

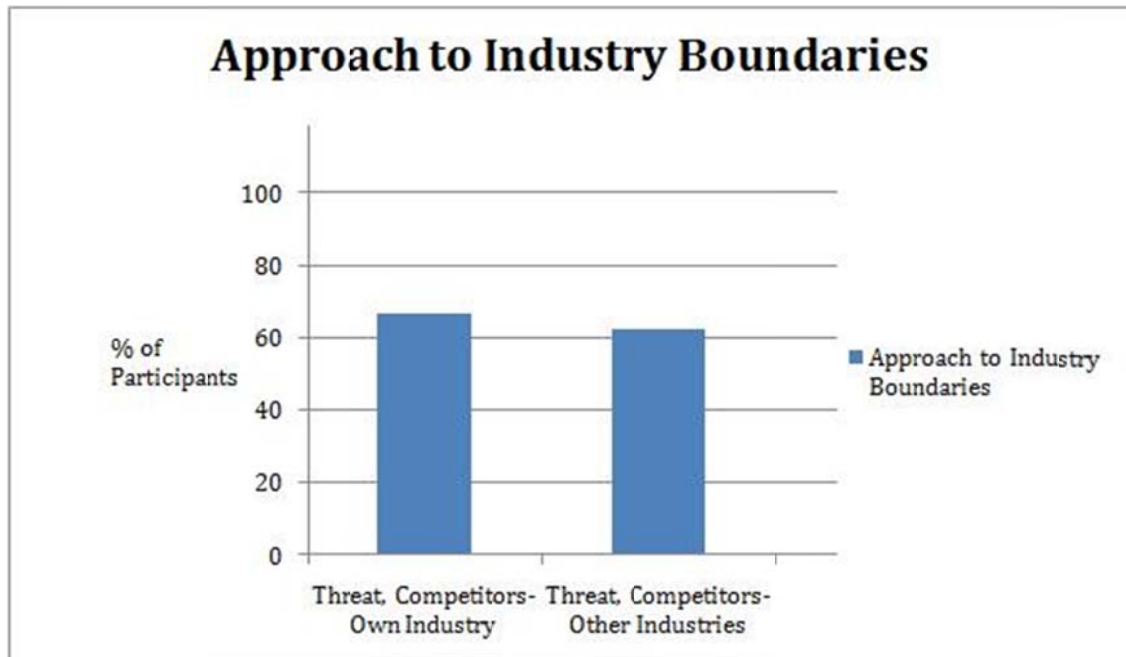


Figure 21: Approach to Industry Boundaries

For the question, ‘*Wilkinson has a threat from the competitors in the retail industry*’, 66.66% of participants has answered “Yes”. And for a similar question, ‘*Wilkinson has a threat from the competitors of the other industries*’, 62.60% of participants had answered “Yes”. Using these values, a plot is drawn as shown in the figure 21 where the X-axis resembles the threats and the Y-axis resembles the percentage of participants. From the values it can be observed that, there are almost an equal amount of threats from both the competitors of the retail industry and the competitors of the other industries.

Narrative Overview of Finding-9: Existing market space Vs new Untapped market space

Creating a blue ocean is creating a new demand and this new demand is possible by creating new to the world products/services, creating new trends etc (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). To find out whether Wilkinson can create a new demand by creating a new trend, the researcher had included the following questions in the questionnaire, ‘*Wilkinson focus on developing new to the world services*’, ‘*Wilkinson strive to adapt to new trends when competitors has proven its potential by making a profit from it*’, ‘*Wilkinson tries to understand the future*

trends/technological advancements before competitors'. The participants who positively responded to these questions were 18.75%, 31.24%, and 18.18% respectively. These values were plotted on a graph as shown in the figure 22. The X-axis represents the new to the world services and trends, and Y-axis represents the percentage of participants. From the figure it can be found that, Wilkinson is more focused on adapting to trends than offering new to the world services and creating/shaping the trends.

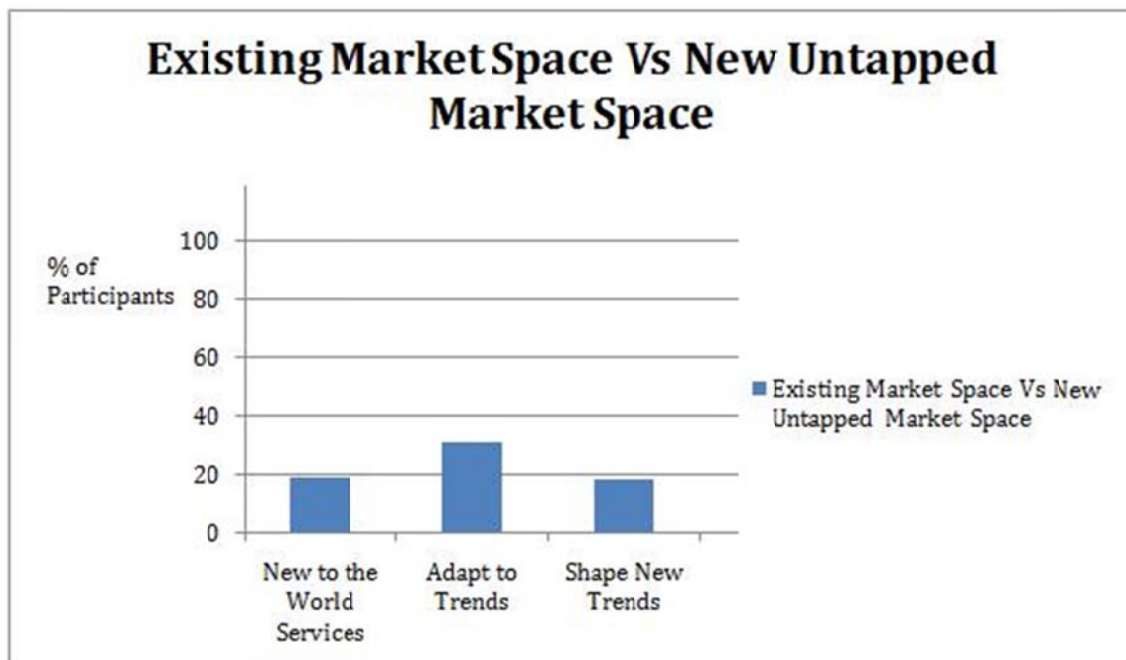


Figure 22: Existing Market Space Vs New Untapped Market Space

4.5 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the collected data, analysis of the participants and the key findings of the research. All the findings were explained by using bar diagrams. However, detailed discussion of these findings can be found in the following chapter.

5.1 Introduction

The current chapter analyses the key findings of the research that is associated with the strategic management of Wilkinson. It also presents a critical evaluation of the adopted research methodology and considers the findings in the context of literature that was studied in chapter 2. Conclusions about the research are drawn and then present the overall conclusions about the implications of the findings of the research issue. Finally, the limitations of the study and the opportunities for further research are described.

5.2 Critical Evaluation of Adapted Methodology

The methodology used for this research has been detailed in chapter 3 along with the justifications and their limitations. However, in this chapter, these research methods are critically evaluated with respect to the success and failure of each.

5.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to collect the qualitative data for triangulating the numerical data that was collected from the online questionnaire, the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used. Prior to the interviews, the participants were provided with sufficient information about the purpose of interview. Although, relevant information was obtained from these interviews, the time spent on the interviews was considerably short due to the availability of the resources. Moreover, for taking notes of the interview, the researcher had to spend considerable time and effort.

5.2.2 Online Questionnaire

The data obtained from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and the questions fetched from the BOS theory are used in creating the online questionnaire. The basic idea of using the online questionnaire is to get information about the perceptions of the employees about the

Wilkinson's strategic approach. Although, the electronic distribution of the questionnaire had a response rate of 97.22%, which can be considered as successful, it may have affected the data collected because of some employees who might not have had enough time to properly read the question and think about their responses. Furthermore, more costs and efforts would have been incurred by the researcher in order to make the employees answer the questionnaire more elatedly and patiently.

5.3 Analysis and Conclusions

Why Wilkinson? From the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the store managers, it was understood that the customers shop at Wilkinson because of the Quality of the Customer Service. But when the same question was asked through the online questionnaire, it was observed that maximum participants (34.65%) have chosen *Low costs* as the main reason for customers shopping at Wilkinson (Figure 15). From the organisation point of view, having both these factors may seem favorable, but when keenly observed, it is understood that the expectations and the beliefs of the store managers are slightly mismatching with those of their staff. On the other side, although the organisation emphasizes on '*everyday low prices*' (wilkinsonplus.com), from the figures it seems customers are not that attracted towards this slogan.

The other considerable factor is *promotional offers* which are offered seasonally such as Christmas offers, Spring offers, Halloween offers etc. According to 16.83% respondents, promotional offers attract the customers to shop at Wilkinson. But as these offers are seasonal, it might become irrelevant for the organisation to completely rely and relate these factors to the organisation growth. So, it is suggestible to focus on the type of products too.

According to the Wilkinson's magazine (Wilko-Own Brand, 2010), there are almost 9500 own brand products (OBP) which already accounted for 38% of total sales in 2010. But only 7.92% of questionnaire respondents have shown this as a reason for customers visiting the store. The reason behind this gap could be lack of necessary information systems at store level to monitor the product profitability in an accurate and timely manner. Supporting this, Forrester (1995) states that, most of the European retailers lack providing critical information to its store level employees, because they assume that providing key information such as commercial investments, logistics costs and financial data to the store level employees, who mostly are

temporary workers, could be a threat to the company. However, for the Wilkinson to attract more customers and grow steadily, it is suggestible that it should consider providing at least basic data about its OBPs to the store level employees and keep focusing on all other relevant factors, which are generally implemented in strategy formulation stage (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2001).

<i>Current Competitive Position</i>	<i>Total % of participants agreed (and strongly agreed)</i>
Growing faster than any other store in the industry	58.82
Focus on the identified target market	40.00
Need for a strategic shift	42.86
Need to change the current business strategy	31.43
Flexibility to new trends	51.43
<i>Strategy Formulation</i>	
Clear target market	48.57
Knowledge of profit margins	68.57
Knowledge of strengths, weaknesses, and strategies of its competitors	51.43
<i>Strategy Implementation</i>	
Effectiveness of the strategy (clear, simple & easy)	54.29
Supports Creativity and Innovation	51.43
Managers motivation to staff regarding strategy implementation	37.14
Availability of different strategies to overcome the competition	57.58
<i>Strategy Quotient (Average)</i>	<i>49.46</i>

Table 4: Factors considered for Strategy Quotient Calculator

(Adopted from strategy4u.com)

But, prior to strategy formulation, it is necessary to understand what the current strategic approach is and where the organisation currently holds the place in the market place (strategy4u.com). So, to understand the current strategic approach of Wilkinson, the research's first aim, a tool called *Strategy-Quotient Calculator* (adopted from strategy4u.com) is used. The factors considered and their findings are tabulated in table 4.

Based on the responses to these factors, the Strategy Quotient Score (SQ Score) of Wilkinson is 49.46. According to *position table* (Table 5) provided by stagevu.com, Wilkinson is in competitor's cross-hairs and is almost dazed and confused. This answers the first aim of this research.

SQ Score	Current Position of the Organisation
90 – 100	King of the Competition – for now!
70 – 90	Little Improvement Needed
50 – 70	Dazed and Confused
30 – 50	In Competitor's Cross-hairs
0 – 30	Organisation for Extinction

Table 5: Strategy Quotient Calculator
(Adopted from strategy4u.com)

An SQ score in this range would indicate that the organisation is too much focused on operational issues and the short-term results. The reason behind this could be the decisions that are made on event-by-event basis rather than being made with a set of strategic parameters (Robert and Racine, 2001). But, when the history of the organisation is seen, it can be understood that there is a steady growth throughout its life since it opened its very first store in 1930s. And this was possible because of the organisation's long-term focus and results (wilkinsonplus.com).

The derived SQ score pose a threat of competitive tactics. The reason behind this could be a fuzzy vision. The differing views of the strategic vision among the management team could cause an inconsistent operational performance and surprises frequently by the competitive

tactics. (Robert and Racine, 2001). Contrasting this, more than half of the participants (57.58%) believe that Wilkinson has different strategies to overcome the competition. Although this is a positive sign for the organisation, it has to be alert with the strengths and the strategies of the competitors, otherwise the operational performance would be even worse (Holland, 2000).

The derived SQ score, 49.46 almost resembles the dazed and confused score (Table 5). According to Robert and Racine (2001), a dazed and confused score would resemble that there is some degree of the ambiguity in the management team over strategy which is generally focused on either low costs or differentiation but not on both. This ambiguity causes periodic disagreements over the strategic direction. However, if this ambiguity is removed, the organisation will achieve maximum success (Robert and Racine, 2001). But, the question 'How to remove this ambiguity?', or in other words, 'how to maintain low costs by being different?' arises. The solution for this, according to Kim and Mauborgne (2005) is BOS. But in order to use this BOS, an organisation must first draw its strategy canvas and check whether the organisation can follow the four-action framework (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). So, the researcher made an attempt to draw the strategy canvas, shown in figure 19, for Wilkinson. Parts of the strategy canvas are taken in order to discuss whether the BOS can be implemented in Wilkinson.

Part-1: Differentiation and/or Cost cutting strategies

From the first part of the strategy canvas (figure 19), it is observed that the organisation is strongly focused on cost-cuttings (supported by 72.72% of participants) and is substantially less focused on differentiation (supported by 24.24% of participants). It means Wilkinson has both differentiation and low costs focus. But how far, these two strategies help Wilkinson gain competitive advantage is to be questioned. As a solution, although there is a false assumption in the strategic literature of differentiation and low costs business strategies being inconsistent, Hill (1988) suggests that, differentiation can be a means for the organisations to establish an overall low-cost position, and this combination could be helpful in creating a sustainable competitive advantage. This combination according to Kim and Mauborgne (2005) leads to *Value Innovation*, a directive for BOS.

From the figure 20, it is understood that Wilkinson has a slimmed cost structure, which might mean the costs are spend only on the development and labour, rather than spending on high fixed costs (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). 72.72% of respondents believe that Wilkinson is focusing on cost-cuttings. This focus on costs helps to understand the fact that the organisation is in a development and expansion phase. This statement is strengthened by the current phase of Wilkinson which is planning and working towards establishing 500 stores by 2012 (Annual Report, 2010). However, the organisations which state that they are cost-conscious naturally spend high during expansion, which are expected to be at the expense of the innovation and quality (Robert and Racine, 2001). The competition can also be seen as impacting the organisation's cost-cutting focus. In order to increase the profitability, most of the organisations strive to achieve low costs, but the problem is determining where to draw the line, for so called *Value Innovation*. From the questionnaire, it is understood that Wilkinson is more cost-focused and less differentiation focused. Hence, it is concluded that the organisation is not pursuing the value innovation in line with BOS (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005), the second aim of this research.

Part-2: Approach to Industry Boundaries

Wilkinson, according to 66.66% of participants (Figure 21), perceive increasing competition from the existing ones and/or new entrants in the own industry. It is evident that the market is not well-defined. Wilkinson, according to 48.57% of participants, lacks the knowledge of its competitors. This might be because of not conducting the in-depth competitor analysis or might be finding it difficult to define or might be unaware of its competitors. This general view of fuzzy market space and the competitive boundaries indicate that Wilkinson looks across industry boundaries but do not try to outperform its competitors within the own industry by grabbing a bigger share of the existing market (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

Most of the organisations experience a higher, or at least considerable, threat from the competitors of the other industries. Wilkinson (according to 62.60% of participants) is also experiencing a threat from the competitors of other industries. To overcome these threats, Wilkinson has to offer products and services to different buyer groups across industries. Thus, looking across various industries which is similar to looking across the chain of buyers, one of

the principles of BOS (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005), strongly advises Wilkinson to implement BOS, the third aim of this research.

Part-3: Compete in Existing Market Space Vs Creating New Untapped Market Space

From this part of canvas (Figure 22), it is understood that Wilkinson offers products and services that are relatively broad. It mainly focuses on revising and improving the existing products or service lines. But its focus is neither to invent new-to-the world services for a new unused market space nor participate in shaping the trends of the industry. According to Kim and Mauborgne (2005), this type of organisation operates in Red Ocean. This was also proved in the questionnaire, in which, almost 45.71% of participants believe that Wilkinson is not having a clear, simple, and easy to understand strategy for handling competitions. Rather it focuses mainly on increasing its number of stores, developing its services and technologies and gaining recognition and attention to its products or services (wilkinsonplus.com).

From the figure 22 it can be observed that, Wilkinson is more focused on adapting to industry trends. Although the organisation is focusing on influencing the industry trends, it is simultaneously forced to adapt to other external changes and trends in the industry. Wilkinson will not be successful, if it closes its eyes for the surroundings, only focusing on its main objective. It should create the trend in a new market space where the competition would be irrelevant, which according to Kim and Mauborgne (2005) is Blue Ocean Strategy, the research's third and final aim.

5.3 Overall Conclusion

The fluctuating market presents continuing challenges to the retailers. It is becoming impossible to capture all customers with one operation or a strategy, though they are offered a wide choice of shopping experiences. Therefore, the retailers must first identify the strong implications of a new buyer market, define their market space and direct their strengths to solve the specific market issues such as making competition irrelevant (Lewison, 1994).

Success, which has been changing according to markets, level of competition, technology, consumer attitudes and demographics etc., will be depending upon the level of retailer's understanding about the value innovation, buyer needs and expectations. Thus, in order to become a retail industry leader, Wilkinson has to create a new market space by coming out of the competition, and focus on the buyer needs, values and expectations.

5.5 Limitations of the Research

The researcher's approach in conducting the literature review in chapter two has some limitations which should be acknowledged. Firstly, other than texts, the researcher had gathered data relying on the journal databases such as EBSCOhost (Elite), Sciencedirect, Wiley Interscience, and Emerald. This reliability might have caused the researcher to overlook some of the crucial viewpoints on the strategic implementation and BOS. Secondly, the researcher had searched the articles using the keywords 'strategy formulation', 'strategy implementation', and 'blue ocean strategy', which might resulted in the omission of some other important and more relevant articles. Finally, rather than four branches of Wilkinson, considering more would have fetched a specific and detailed outcome.

5.6 Opportunities for Future Research

The current research provides several opportunities for future research as listed below

1. Most of the current models and frameworks of strategy implementation are just updated versions (with added variables) of the previous works (Okumus, 2001, Beer and Eisenstat, 2000, Noble and Mokwa, 1999, and Skivington and Draft, 1991). Some authors even re-group variables from different angles, which cannot be tested empirically (Noble and Mokwa, 1999). Thus, there is an opportunity for further research to focus on developing new comprehensive strategy implementation frameworks.
2. BOS suggests organisations to make competition irrelevant by shifting its focus away from competition and create uncontested market space by focusing on buyer value (Kim and

Mauborgne, 2005). This theory focuses on buyer value rather than customer value. So, there is an opportunity for future research to find whether “Can Blue Ocean Strategy be seen as a customer-oriented strategy”?

3. In the current turbulent retail market, Wilkinson is facing many environmental challenges like most other retailers in UK (Wilkinson Annual Report, 2010). There is an excellent opportunity to study, how the BOS helps Wilkinson to overcome its one of the major challenges, *be environmentally smart*.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the results obtained from the research conducted, the researcher recommends Wilkinson to:

- Abandon all possible outdated and irrelevant policies that do not make anymore profits.
- Reduce unnecessary stock losses / wastes, and power consumption during daytime
- Raise the customer service and advertising standards up to the customers expectation levels
- Introduce Kiosk shopping (In-store and external) and allow franchising to gain more profits.

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APPENDIX

A-1. Introduction Letter

Wilkinson Strategic Assessment

Hello,

I'm Gopinath Bukke, doing my Masters in Business Administration (MBA) at Chester Business School, University of Chester, England. I'm working as a Part-time Customer Service Assistant in Wilkinson, Chester.

As part of my dissertation ("*Leading Wilkinson Retails into Blue Ocean*"), i would like to know about the Wilkinson and it's current Corporate/Business Strategies. For this purpose, i would like you to participate in the survey followed, and provide your valuable feedback.

There are around 32 questions and it should take you a maximum of 10-12 minutes to complete the survey.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Gopinath at 0755 2137566 or by email at the email address specified below.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the survey now by clicking on the Next button below.

Thankyou
Gopinath Bukke

0755 2137566
0917310@chester.ac.uk
jien313@yahoo.co.uk

A-2 Questionnaire used for Collecting data

	Exit Survey »
Questions marked with a * are required	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; text-align: center; background-color: #f0f0f0;">100%</div>	
Wilkinson Strategic Assessment	
<hr/>	
1. Customers shop at Wilkinson because of its	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Low prices
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wide Range of Wilko brand products
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wide Range of Non-Wilko brand products
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Service Quality
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attractive offers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Others <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
 2. Wilkinson has a clear target market(customers/buyer groups)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cannot Say
 3. Wilkinson focuses on the identified target market.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cannot Say
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

4. Wilkinson knows the profit margins for each of its product/market segments.



Yes



No



Cannot Say

5. In UK, Wilkinson is growing faster than any other store in the retail industry.



Strongly Disagree



Disagree



Cannot Say



Agree



Strongly Agree

6. Wilkinson knows the strengths, weaknesses, and strategies of its key competitors



Strongly Disagree



Disagree



Cannot Say



Agree



Strongly Agree

7. Wilkinson has different strategies to be in and/or to overcome the competition.



Yes



No



Cannot Say

8. Wilkinson's business strategy is Clear, Simple and Easy to understand.



Strongly Disagree

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

9. The Wilkinson employees follow the path of the company's strategic direction

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Cannot Say

**10. Rank the order of priorities for Wilkinson
(1-maximum; 2-average; 3-minimum)**

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Low Costs | <input type="text"/> |
| Differentiation | <input type="text"/> |
| High quality Customer Service | <input type="text"/> |

11. Wilkinson is flexible enough to adapt to new trends

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Cannot Say

12. Wilkinson believes in Creativity and Innovation.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

13. To become successful, Wilkinson should *abandon*

- ☐ Underperforming Stores
- ☐ Outdated Policies
- ☐ Elderly Staff members
- ☐ Other

14. To become successful, Wilkinson should *reduce*

- ☐ Unnecessary costs(day electricity)
- ☐ Stock Loss(wastes)
- ☐ Non-Wilko brand products
- ☐ Number of staff members
- ☐ Other

15. To become successful, Wilkinson should *raise*

- ☐ Own brand products
- ☐ Advertising standards
- ☐ Young and talented(innovative) staff
- ☐ Customer service standards
- ☐ Usage of recycled/environment friendly products
- ☐ Other

16. To become successful, Wilkinson should *create* (introduce)

- ☐ Buyer specific stores(Wilkinson-Sports)
- ☐ Kiosks shopping(instore and external)
- ☐ Periodic payment(eg: Pay monthly/quarterly etc)
- ☐ Franchising

- ☐ Theme oriented store designs(eg: football,avatar)
- ☐ Other

17. There's a need for waking employees up to the need for a strategic shift.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

18. Managers at Wilkinson, have sufficient time to motivate the staff regularly

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

19. There's a need to change the current business strategy of the Wilkinson

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

20. Wilkinson should focus on creating the demand rather than competing for the existing one.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree

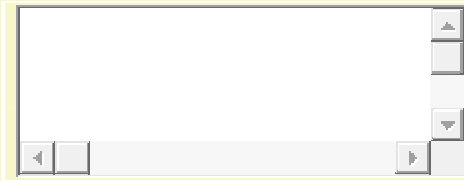
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

21. What is the Current Corporate/Business Strategy Followed at Wilkinson?

22. What is Wilkinson doing differently to retain existing customers?

23. What is Wilkinson doing differently to attract new customers?

24. What are the future goals/milestones of the Wilkinson?



25. Wilkinson have its own niche in the market / Wilkinson try to offer services different from other companies

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

26. Wilkinson is trying to cut its costs

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

27. Wilkinson Perceive a threat from competitors in retail industry

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

28. Wilkinson perceive a threat from potential competitors in other industries

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Cannot Say
Agree
Strongly Agree

29. Wilkinson focuses on revisions and improving existing services.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Cannot Say
Agree
Strongly Agree

30. Wilkinson focus on developing new-to-the-world products/services.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Cannot Say
Agree
Strongly Agree

31. Wilkinson strive to adapt to new trends when competitors has proven its potential by making a profit from it.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Cannot Say
Agree
Strongly Agree

32. Wilkinson strive to understand future trends/technological advancements before competitors.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☒ Cannot Say
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Any further comments you would like to add.....

First Name: *

Designation: *

Branch: *